

April 15, 1994

LB 741, 988A

SPEAKER WITHEM: LB 988A passes with the emergency clause attached. I know we are under call, members, but sometime later on this afternoon, when we are no longer under call, be advised in Room 2102 there is a retirement reception for Marge Fahrnbruch who is leaving the Bill Drafters Office after this session, and all members are encouraged to spend some time down there when they do have time. Mr. Clerk, LB 741.

CLERK: Mr. President, I have a motion on the desk. Senator Wesely would move to return the bill.

SPEAKER WITHEM: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members, Senator Hall and I are just going to take a couple of seconds to talk about the status of the bill, and then we will move on. LB 741 is a bill that was introduced by Senator Hall and myself last session to raise the alcohol tax. It was advanced by the Revenue Committee, and advanced across the board to Final Reading last session. At Final Reading, last year we decided to pass over the bill. With the budget status that we were in, we did not feel...we did not feel the need to pursue it and held the bill for this year. Similarly, Senator Hall and I had decided to hold the bill until after the budget decisions and veto questions to see whether or not the revenue raised by this bill would be necessary. I believe the bill raises something like a million and a half dollars a year in additional revenue. Well, Senator Hall and I originally and I think continue to feel that alcohol tax increases should go into mental health and drug and alcohol treatment. Typically in the past, that's where alcohol tax has gone to, not always, but typically. And certainly, we are underfunding mental health services, and so there is a desire, I believe, on our part to pursue that. But, nevertheless, the bill doesn't call for that. It calls for a tax increase without designation of where the money goes. However, after the vetoes and after discussing with a number of people about the decisions, whether or not to override, it doesn't appear that there is as high a demand for additional revenues as might be necessary, so I think our decision is going to be, I know our decision is going to be to pass over the bill till next year. But the point I think we want to make is that an alcohol tax increase is going to be back next year. It is, in my view, going to be a larger increase than what is being proposed here. This is a very modest increase, and I think that money ought to go into mental health and drug and alcohol